

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 IO-14 AID-20 /150 W

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R 301215Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6287

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 7441

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJECT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DECISION HITS GOVERNMENT

1. SUMMARY: AFTER A MARATHON INTERPELLATION OF THE PM AND MINISTERS FROM HIS PARTY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WITH ONLY A SMALL FRACTION PRESENT, PASSED AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT DECISION WITHOUT, HOWEVER, FORMALLY WITHDRAWING CONFIDENCE IN THE CABINET. THE DECISION, CHARGING GOVERNMENT INCOMPETENCE AND IMPLYING CABINET LACK OF RESPECT FOR THE CONSTITUTION, IS AIMED IN LARGE PART AT THE REPUBLICANS IN THE GOVERNMENT AND THEIR REFUSAL TO UNDERGO INTERPELLATION BY THE ASEMBLY. END SUMMARY.

2. ON MAY 28 THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BEGAN AN INTERPELLATION OF PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET AND KEY SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY CABINET MEMBERS WHICH AFTER TWO DAYS AND ONE NIGHT OF QUESTIONING RESULTED IN A FOUR-POINT ANTI-GOVERNMENT "DECISION." THE DEPUTIES DID NOT PASS A RESOLUTION TO WITHDRAW CONFIDENCE IN THE CABINET

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OR IN ANY INDIVIDUAL MINISTERS, AND THEREBY STOPPED SHORT OF

POSING A FORMAL CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT.

3. THE DECISION A) NOTED THAT THE LONG BORET GOVERNMENT DID NOT REPLY SATISFACTORILY UNDER INTERPELLATION AND SCORED UNSPECIFIED MINISTERS AS INCOMPETENTS; B) ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO RESPECT THE CONSTITUTION, C) URGED THE GKR TO MAINTAIN REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS AS AFFIRMED IN A PREVIOUS PARLIAMENTARY JOINT SESSION, AND D) REQUESTED THE GOVERNMENT TO MONITOR AIR AND RIVER TRANSPORT INTO PHNOM PENH. ASSEMBLY CONTACTS SAY THE FIRST TWO POINTS ARE AIMED AT THE RIVAL REPUBLICAN PARTY PRESENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE REFUSAL OF REPUBLICAN MINISTERS TO SUBMIT TO INTERPELLATION. COMMENT: THE INCOMPETENCY CHARGE IS LIKELY AIMED AT, AMONG OTHERS, DEFENSE MINISTER THAPPANA NGINN, WHO REPORTEDLY DREW HEAVY FIRE FROM THE DEPUTIES ON THE ISSUE OF STOLEN AVIATION GASOLINE.

4. THE 75 DEPUTIES WHO LASTED OUT THE ENTIRE OVER-NIGHT SESSION REPORTEDLY BROKE OFF THE DEBATE TO GATHER FOR A VOTE JUST AFTER DAWN THIS MORNING (MAY 30). WHEN THEY REASSEMBLED ONLY 29 WERE PRESENT TO VOTE ON THE "DECISION" WHICH PASSED BY 20 TO 9. (BY CONTRAST, A FULL-FLEDGED RESOLUTION TO WITHDRAW CONFIDENCE IN THE CABINET REQUIRES A MAJORITY VOTE AND, IF NOT ACCEPTED BY THE PRESIDENT, NEEDS TWO-THIRDS TO MAKE IT STICK THE SECOND TIME AROUND.)

5. COMMENT: THE INTERPELLATION CLIMAXES A MONTH-LONG CAMPAIGN AGAINST LONG BORET'S STEWARDSHIP WHICH INITIALLY LINED UP A FAIR SECTION OF RULING SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY LEADERSHIP BEHIND ASSEMBLY VICE-PRESIDENT PAN SOTHI'S PRIME MINISTERIAL AMBITIONS. THE "DECISION," WHILE STRONGLY ANTI-GOVERNMENT IN TONE, IS DILUTED IN IMPACT BY THE SMALL NUMBER OF DEPUTIES INVOLVED IN PASSING IT. WE BELIEVE THAT THE MAJORITY REALIZE THAT THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR A DEBILITATING ROUND OF MINISTERIAL MUSICAL CHAIRS. HOWEVER, THE DECISION MAKES CLEAR THAT A STRONG CORE OF ANTI-REPUBLICAN SENTIMENT EXISTS IN THE ASSEMBLY WHICH LONG BORET WILL HAVE TO CONTEND WITH TO KEEP HIS COALITION VIABLE.

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## Message Attributes

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